

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, August 15, 2005

Why More Antique Auto Collectors Didn't Run Stanleys: During the past 60 years, whenever we've been somewhere with the Stanleys, interest by the general public has far outweighed the marque's numerical strength. Until a generation ago, nearly everyone had heard of a Stanley steamer, although few had actually seen one. About 1946, the *Bulb Horn*, publication of the Veteran Motor Car Club of America, ran a poll of its members asking what antique car was the most popular. The results were not even close; Stanleys outpaced all other makes by a large margin (if my memory serves me correctly, 99 respondents said "Stanley," something like 20-plus said "Packard," and on down the line). Why, then, have Stanleys been a very small minority of collectible American cars? Recently, we can say the scarcity and the price tag are the reasons, but this was not the case 50 years ago. It had to be "technology" or the lack of it. Many early gas car owners yearned to own and operate a Stanley (or a White), but for many reasons, very few did. When these good people, and many were close friends of my father and me, delved into it, they usually discovered a steam car was so different from what they understood and had mastered that they feared they could never get onto it, and they'd better not try (or, possibly, better not make a fool of themselves). A steam car and an internal combustion car were certainly dissimilar and possibly not compatible. The winner was highly technical; the loser was a great power whose time had passed.